

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 28 August 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and to Security Council resolution 2116 (2013), extending the mandate of UNMIL until 30 September 2014, as well as my report on UNMIL dated 15 August 2014 (S/2014/598), in which I recommended extending UNMIL for one year, until 30 September 2015, while making adjustments to the Mission's focus and strength. In that report, I also committed the United Nations to support the efforts of the Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in responding to a devastating outbreak of the Ebola virus disease, which has caused the death of more than 1,400 people in West Africa since December 2013.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has escalated so drastically in recent weeks that, on 8 August 2014, the World Health Organization declared it to be a public health emergency of international concern. To facilitate a coordinated international response, on 12 August 2014 I appointed Dr. David Nabarro to serve as the Senior United Nations System Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease. He has already begun efforts to mobilize the means urgently required to address this human tragedy, including support for the rebuilding of health systems that have collapsed in the face of the Ebola epidemic. He was in Liberia from 21 to 23 August 2014 as part of a regional visit to assess the situation and make recommendations for the response going forward.

Ebola is having a devastating impact on Liberia, with the Ministry of Health recording, as of 24 August 2014, a cumulative total of 1,378 cases, resulting in 743 deaths. While the Ebola outbreak began primarily as a medical emergency, it has become more complex, with political, security and humanitarian implications that are significant and dynamic. Its long-term effects on the people and the economy of Liberia are likely to be considerable. On 6 August 2014, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf declared a 90-day state of emergency, noting that the scale and scope of the epidemic exceeded the response capacity of national institutions, requiring extraordinary measures in order to save lives, including the suspension of certain constitutionally guaranteed rights and privileges, for example, the restriction of movement and of freedom of assembly. The Legislature has endorsed that decision.

Additional measures announced by the President include a moratorium on official travel for government officials and the deployment of the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Liberia National Police to enforce the isolation of the areas of the country most affected by Ebola. Meanwhile, the Government has also established



mechanisms to coordinate the national and international response, and allocated emergency funding for the fight against Ebola. On the recommendation of the National Elections Commission, which advised that preparing for and conducting elections in the present circumstances would be neither possible nor appropriate, the judiciary is considering the constitutionality of postponing the senatorial elections scheduled for October 2014.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Government of Liberia to contain it, the Ebola virus continues to spread, fuelled by fear, denial, tradition and lack of public trust in national institutions. Compounding the medical emergency is the surging cost of food, water and other basic goods, particularly in cordoned-off areas. Meanwhile, the country is becoming increasingly isolated as a result of the decision of some airline companies to cease servicing countries affected by Ebola, which has implications for the humanitarian response. There are also serious security risks. In West Point, a community in Monrovia under isolation, there have been a number of security incidents, including the storming of an Ebola isolation centre by community members on 16 August 2014, as well as deadly clashes between community members and security personnel enforcing the quarantine of the area announced on 19 August 2014. On 20 August 2014, further measures announced by the President to contain the disease, including a nationwide curfew, went into effect.

The escalating Ebola crisis is having such a profound impact that it will be necessary for all of the international partners of Liberia, including the United Nations, to fully mobilize all resources behind the fight against the epidemic. Moreover, as the Government and other partners are focusing on Ebola, some processes at the core of the mandate of UNMIL, as set out in resolution 2116 (2013), are currently on hold or have significantly slowed, including constitutional review, national reconciliation, land reform, the capacity-building of national security agencies, legal reform and natural resource management. Additionally, it is unlikely that the senatorial elections, which UNMIL should be mandated to support, as recommended in my 15 August 2014 report, will take place as scheduled in October 2014. Consequently, I have decided to temporarily reduce the presence in Liberia of a small number of personnel performing functions related to these areas. However, some additional medical and other specific reinforcements may be required. The Government of Liberia has been consulted and supports these proposals.

The presence and continued operations of UNMIL in Liberia remain critical, including the deterrent effect of its uniformed personnel, deployed in 11 of the country's 15 counties. The Mission has an important role to play in protecting civilians. Though it has not, and will not, enforce the Government-imposed isolation of affected areas, UNMIL will continue to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including by helping to provide the necessary security conditions, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1509 (2003). UNMIL must also closely monitor the political and human rights situation during the present crisis, in order to mitigate any exactions or abuses that could trigger a reversal of more than a decade of peace in Liberia. Work will also continue in other mandate areas, where possible. All United Nations personnel in Liberia have been educated about the appropriate preventive measures that would minimize the risk of contracting Ebola, which is not airborne and requires direct contact with the bodily fluids of a symptomatic infected person or the deceased. I am therefore confident that United Nations personnel may continue their important work in Liberia.

Given the exceptional circumstances described above, I am recommending a technical rollover of the mandate of UNMIL for a period of three months, and that the Security Council defer consideration of my proposals for the extension of the mandate of UNMIL, as set out in paragraphs 95 to 97 of my 15 August 2014 report, until 30 December 2014.

I would be most grateful if you could bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **BAN** Ki-moon